9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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415 The round-bottomed three-legged iron pots (Figs. 5 and 34), of various sizes from the small porridge pot to the giant 18 gallon potato pot, are descended from the bronze cauldrons of which there are many specimens in the museums ranging in date from 700 B.C. to 1700 A.D. The cauldron was in old times the special property of the head of the house and figures prominently in Celtic mythology and folklore. The pot has been described as the "maid of all work," but boiling potatoes for man and beast is now its main task. The heaviest pots are going out of use with the introduction of raised grates.

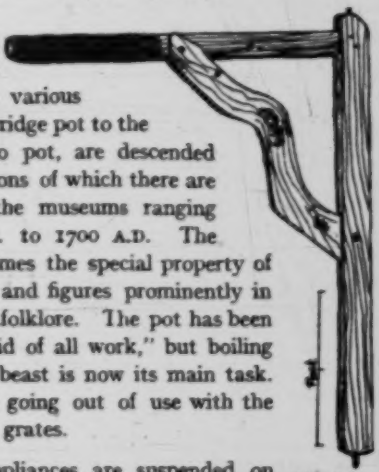

Fig. 36.

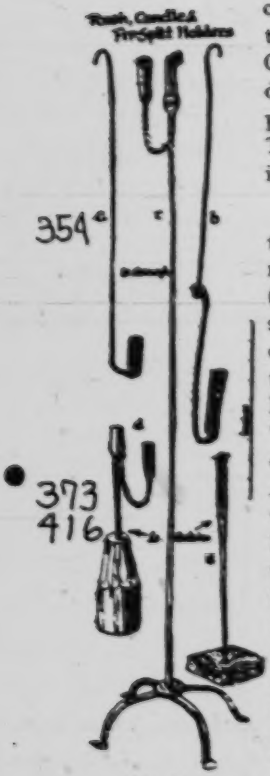

Fig. 37.

These various appliances are suspended on the iron crook or adjustible pot hook, to which many different kinds of fittings or "bools" (Fig. 35) can be attached. The crook may simply hang from a bar placed across the chimney, but more commonly from a crane (Fig. 29) which swivels at the side of the fire. A few examples of the wooden crane survive (Fig. 36) By the fireside, too, are kept the short iron tongs or "mudyees" and the heather besom (Fig. 29) which is more efficient than any broom in cleaning among the hearthstones. A goose-wing serves to dust the pots and clean the griddle when baking. Here by the fireside was hung the crusie oil lamp (Chapter 16, Fig. 105) which is another element of the north-western province of European folk-culture and may have its prototype in the famous "hanging bowls" of over 1,000 years ago. A selection of old-fashioned smith-made iron light-holders of different kinds is shown in Fig. 37. There are more elaborate styles, but the charm of these homely appliances lies in their simplicity. The upper figures from Co. Armagh (a and b) show weavers' candlesticks, made for suspension from the loom. Figure (e) is for holding a "split" or thin strip of resinous bog-fir. The others (c and d) are

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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rush-light holders with attached candle-sockets. The dipped rushes were sometimes plaited together to make the light last longer. It is of interest to note that the war-time shortage of oil and candles has led to a revival of the use of rush-lights in some country districts. 373 416

A great amount of interesting information might be collected about the food of the Irish peasantry, the methods of cooking, times of meals and the many customs and superstitions connected with food and drink. We may close this chapter with a few remarks about some foods other than bread It is curious to reflect that the diet of some western districts, " potatoes for 10 months and Indian meal for two," is so largely dependent on crops of New World origin! Potatoes were made tasty with " kitchen " or " point," that is a bit of relish such as a salted herring ; and in difficult times they were only half boiled so that the hard core, called the " moon " or " bone," might prolong the processes of digestion. In Ulster the name given to July was " the blue month " because it was a time of scarcity between the old potatoes and the new crop, but generally speaking milk products were consumed during the summer months. Meat, by which the countryman means beef, was often salted down and reserved for winter use, but meat eating tended to be restricted to certain seasons or festivals such as Christmas, Shrove and Easter. 262 [25] [25]

Another seasonal food was the " sowens " or porridge made from soured " meal-seeds " sifted from the oatmeal. It was traditionally eaten at Hallowe'en ; and the Irish name for the 1st of November is Samhain, or " Sowin." I have heard this dish nicknamed " water bewitched." The thin liquid resulting from steeping the fine meal-dust was also drunk and called " thewin," a substitute for buttermilk. A kind of whey (" troander ") was made by mixing sweet milk and buttermilk, and " drammock " was a harvest drink consisting of raw oatmeal and water. Then there is the boxty bread made from potato flour and cooked on the griddle. Many traditional foods and drinks are now little more than memories and of some, for instance " heather beer," the country folk say that " the secret has been lost." But one might still

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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317 We referred in the first paragraph to sand and gravel: the white shell sand is taken for manure and is also strewn on the kitchen floor, while beach stones and gravel find many uses as cobble stones, pebble-dashing and so on. Among other 226 by-products of the sea we must not forget fish-oil, manu- 373 factured not only as a medicine for cattle but also as an illuminant. The iron crusie lamp (Fig. 105) was not long since the chief source of light in the islands, and until half a century ago large sea-shells are said to have been employed for the purpose in Co. Kerry. The wick of the crusie was a peeled rush or a twist of cotton: because of the strong smell the lamp was hung under the chimney so that the draught carried away the fumes. The abundant sea shells are also utilized for lime on some islands, for example Tory, by burning them in a kiln made of turf.

Fig. 105. Length 15"

Finally, we must not omit the dread harvest of the sea cast up after storms—the timber and food-stuffs and wreckage—always welcome and perhaps in olden days not uninvited. Many an islandman's cabin is roofed with couples of ships' masts, and a visit to treeless Tory or Rathlin will reveal the many uses to which drift timber is put. Mysterious objects brought by the currents from the West Indies occasionally turn up: pumice, perhaps from this source, has been found, treasured no doubt as a magic stone, in sandhill settlements of 4,000 years ago.

162 It is not to be wondered at, when we consider the ancient 226 and varied, if often toilsome and dangerous life of the Irish shores, that the coasts carry a much denser population than districts inland. It should be stressed that these various activities are carried on not as a rule by specialized fishermen but by farmers and peasants to whom the sea offers an accessory source of life and interest, and who often perpetuate the old communal schemes by taking shares in a boat and nets. Old ways die hardest by the sea; prohibitions and super- [462] stitions are rife, and fishing is one of the few occupations in which women take no active part.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

241 sometimes raises cases of trespass. The fences are the usual dry stone
[423] walls of the west, and the fields seldom have gates.
[417] The crops most grown are barley, oats, potatoes, and a little rye, and a few turnips. The manures are sea-weed and farm-yard manure, and occasionally old thatch, saturated with peat smoke, and well rotted with age. The agricultural implements employed are the spade and shovel, and the sickle; the use of plough or harrow is not known. Low-lying, damp places are utilized for the growth of osiers for panniers, baskets, and lobster-pots.

As is the case in many fishing communities, the fields are not well kept, and have a rather untended appearance, the weeds being let grow rankly in the potato fields, the reason given for which is that without the shelter given by the weeds the crop would be speedily destroyed by the winds; but the most probable explanation is that the amount of attention directed towards the fishing at the most critical periods of the year causes the less important occupation to be
[231] to some extent neglected. A family keeps a couple of pigs, some sheep, a cow or two, geese (of which large flocks are kept on the islands), ducks and fowl, but no turkeys.

735 Some sixty families are said to be in very poor circumstances, and of these forty-six have no cattle.

231 The animals are to a large extent supported on the very extensive commonage.

The pigs, cattle, and fowl are taken into the houses at night, while the sheep, geese, and ponies get shelter how they can. The pigs are not regularly fed, but have, as the people express it, "the run of their teeth" of the island, and by feeding on such provision as they can pick up on the sea-shore, the flesh is often rendered rank and fishy-flavoured.

372 Fuel is supplied either by peat cut from the bogs, or, in a large proportion of cases, by "scraws" of the thin peaty layer which covers the rocky surface of the higher and wilder parts of the islands, cut into blocks the size of peats, and dried in the sun. The substance thus obtained can be burned, and will throw out considerable heat, but is extremely dirty and wasteful, as it contains a large proportion of earth and small pebbles, which are left in the ash. From repeated cuttings of these "scraws" the surface of the higher ground has become much deteriorated in value, and this is especially the case on
[237] Inishshark, where there are no bogs. In times of scarcity fish-bones and cow-mats (*bois de râche*) are used as fuel.

●373 For light, petroleum lamps and candles are now generally used,

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

but a few years ago the ordinary means of lighting the houses was a rude open lamp, filled with oil extracted from the livers of fish, and having a piece of peeled rush for a wick.

Kelp-burning was formerly one of the industries of the islands, but of late years it declined rapidly, and is now practically extinct. As to the cause of this decay of a formerly profitable source of income, very different accounts are given, some alleging the poor quality of the weed; others that they were not fairly treated in selling; and others again that it does not pay as well as the fish-curing.

The fish most taken are sea-bream, glassan (a sort of pollock), mackerel, turbot, and plaice, used mostly for home consumption; cod and ling, which are cured at the fish-curing station for exportation, and oil extracted from their livers; also large quantities of crabs and lobsters, which are taken to Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare, from which they are forwarded to the English market. The boat used for conveying them is of peculiar construction, and has a large salt-water tank amidships, in which the lobsters are kept alive. The lobster-pots are of the usual type. There is nothing unusual about their ordinary method of fishing, except that the Inishbofin men, as mentioned in a footnote to the account of that island in the Memoir of the Geological Survey, already alluded to, do not follow the shoals of fish around the western headland, but carry their boats across the narrow isthmus in which Lough Bofin is situated.

The pursuit of the "sun-fish," or basking-shark (*Selache maxima*), was formerly a source of considerable profit to the islanders, but has been almost altogether abandoned of late years owing to the decline in the price of the oil, and partly, it is said, to the loss of several lives on one occasion when a boat was charged and overturned by a wounded fish, also to the partial disappearance for some years of the sharks.

The season for this enterprise is from April until the end of June, and in that time large numbers of these fish were taken formerly, and some are still killed from time to time. Mr. G. H. Kinahan, to whom I am indebted for several notes relative to the condition of the islands some years ago, says:—"The sun-fish fishing was considerable in my time (1870). I have seen strings of seven and nine fish; when caught, they towed them into the harbour, cut out the liver, and left the carcass to rot, or be eaten by the pigs; the stench in the harbour was something to remember." A very full description of the fishing is given by Sir H. W. Gore-Booth in a recent article. He states that the value of the oil (from eight to twelve petroleum barrels full) obtained from the liver of one of these fish has been variously estimated

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

though it may be put to the less innocent purpose of preparing malt for poteen, and a spinning-wheel of the usual type. For light at night modern lamps are coming into use, but in many houses the "flare" is used. It consists of a rude sconce, in which is fastened a cylindrical reservoir for oil, closed at the top by a lid, and having a spout like that of a coffee-pot, through which the wick is drawn. Rush lights are still used by some.

The house is often whitewashed outside; the roof is thatch, of straw in most localities, but on the islands, and some places in the peninsula, bent is use instead. This is laid on over "scraws" of grass-turf and fastened down by sougans (straw ropes), the ends of which may be attached to pegs driven into the walls, or have long pieces of wood or heavy stones fastened to them. These ropes are often arranged in a net work so as to hold the thatch more securely. Coir rope, bought in Belmullet, is now used by some instead of sougans. The gable is stepped or cut away so that the thatch does not project over the end wall.

There are several other types of houses, though the style just described is the most common. Most of the newer houses and those building have chimneys, pig-styes of turf or stone, and in some cases byres. Few of the old one-roomed dwellings, built partly or altogether of turf, are still to be seen, but there are a number of one-roomed huts of stone, many of which have no windows.

The most primitive habitations in the district, and perhaps in Ireland, are the rude huts (*boolies*) on Inishglora, inhabited during the lobster fishing season by the men of Inishkea; they are about a dozen in number, rudely built of dry stone and thatched with "scraws." There is not room to stand upright in them, the height from floor to roof being about 5 feet. Internally they contain a rude bunk filled with straw for sleeping in and a few large stones to sit upon. Cooking appears to be done out of doors. Successive batches of men live in these huts for about three months of the year. Some of the poorest houses on the mainland are in the isolated and primitive village of Fallmore, where few of the dwellings have windows and few or none chimneys. The houses on the islands are decidedly among the best in the district. Many are whitewashed inside, and the furniture is of a superior class, abundant material being thrown up as drift wood. The beds are four-posted structures, with flat board tops, and some of them have bright-coloured curtains, and the bedding is clean and tidy-looking.

6. *Transport.*—Lying as it does far from towns of any size, and separated from the nearest by a wide stretch of wild and thinly-

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

178 grinding barley for cattle food, or in some few cases for malt for [412] *poteen*.

Hooped piggins are used in many houses, as also are sheepskin [415] sieves (*borans*).

The spinning-wheel for wool is of the usual Connaught type, with- 178 out treadle, and is made in the district. The cards used for the wool 283 are imported, being all made in Dublin. The hand-looms are the same as used elsewhere in the West, and of rather rude construction, though capable of turning out good work.

A machine of rather primitive design is used for compressing cloth. 287 It was made by its user, and has been working for many years.

Rush-lights are used in some houses, and in others the rude lamp ● 373 already referred to, which is evidently merely a reproduction in tin-ware of the old stone or iron lamp for fish oil.

The stills employed by the makers of poteen are constructed of tin, 273 and of simple but effective design. They are made in the owners houses by tinkers.

The curragh, of the usual form, is the boat most in use, and seems 501 likely to hold its own. It is now covered with tarred canvas, but seventy years ago horse-skins were used for this purpose. A large stone is often used as an anchor for small boats.

2. *Antiquities* may be divided into two classes—(*a*) Architectural 172 remains, and (*b*) Articles of use or ornament. (*a*) Architectural remains are still very numerous, though many of the most interesting have altogether disappeared; of these the most noticeable was the *Oileach*, the fortified seat of the chiefs of Hy-Fiachrach, which was situated at Elly in the Mullet, on or near the position of Bingham's Castle. Several castles belonging to the Barrets and Burkes have also been entirely destroyed.

Some of the ruins still remaining are of pagan origin, others are ecclesiastical structures. The principal pagan antiquities are the duns or forts, both stone and earthen, the monuments, &c. There are several duns, both within the district actually treated of in this Paper, and along the coast line of the surrounding country; those within the Mullet are *Dunnamoe*, a stone fort of large size, built on a rocky promontory overhanging the sea, and formerly one of the most perfect on this coast; of late years, however, it has suffered severely, the greater part of the wall has been broken down to afford building material for houses and walls about Belmullet; the guard-chambers mentioned by O'Donovan and others are now almost destroyed, the outworks thrown down. One part of the wall alone

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Antrim

PLATE 2

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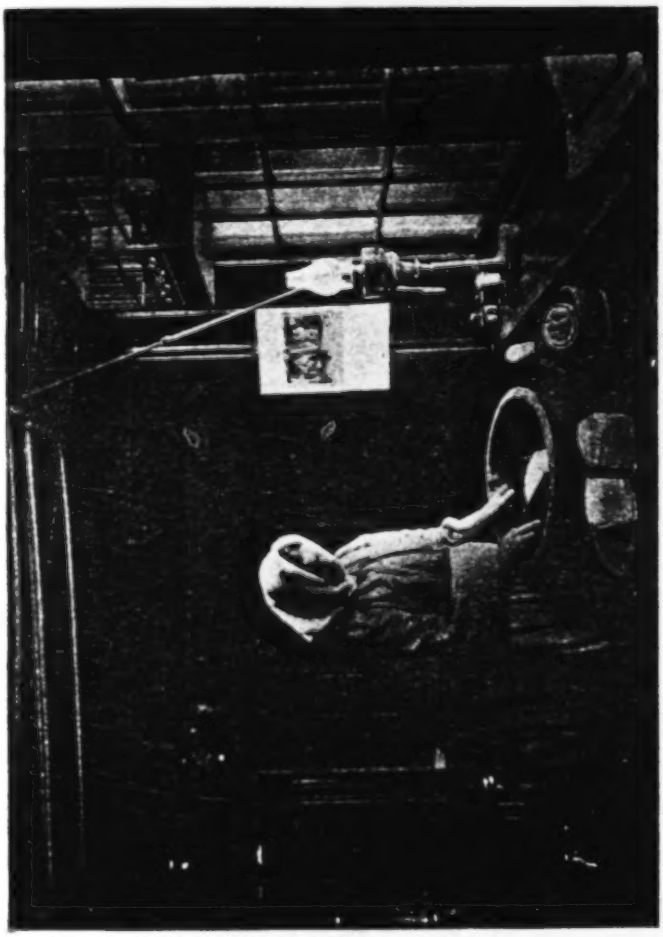

Butter-making in a Co. Antrim farm kitchen.

[FACING p. 33]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

canopy, sometimes on both, resting on the brace-tree is a wattled shelf or loft which goes under various names such as, in Ulster, skeagh, hurdle or flake. The double loft in the fireside from Co. Cavan illustrated in Fig. 21 is slatted and floored with reed matting, the reeds being bound together with split briar after the manner of a bee-skep. As the term hurdle would imply, these lofts are frequently made of wattle. The heat could rise through them and keep everything above bone-dry, and this was the allocated place for storing various treasured possessions as well as a great deal of 'trumpery'. Here the rushes were dried in the preparation of rush lights, and here the horse-collar was stored when not in use, a reminder that it was made partly or wholly of straw and must be kept dry.

If we are right in supposing that the wattled chimney canopy is a relatively late feature it follows that we cannot regard the chimney loft as an old element in the Irish house. Yet the loft is a traditional fitting for which there seems to be some evidence in early literature, and the need for storage-space must have led to the utilization of part of the roof space. It seems that the loft over the kitchen which nowadays has often become a bedroom in the roof—lit by a small gable window and entered by a steep stairway or even a ladder—began as a half-loft over the bottom end. This survived in Clare Island into the present century and was used to store tools and dried fish. In Fermanagh the half-loft was the hens' roosting-place, serving to protect the cows from droppings and now transferred with them to the byre. By tradition the loft is the sleeping-place of the children, and the man and woman of the house have their bed near the fire, either in the kitchen or in the bedroom behind the chimney flue.

Nowhere is the relationship between the parental bed and the fire better defined than in the traditional house of the north-west, where a small bed-wing—the outshot or *cailleach*—projects out from one of the side-walls at the chimney-end of the kitchen (Fig. 8; Fig. 12, 3). The distribution of this type of house, north of a line from Cushendun in Co. Antrim to south-western Galway, corresponds with many other north-western cultural distributions, and the area is curiously coincident with that of the oldest rocks in the country, the infertile schists and

 [text continues on p. 71]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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social and family centre'.[1] The table has never supplanted the fireplace as the focus of social living, a function it has served since the dawn of humanity. As so often happens, folklore endorses this finding: there is an Irish saying that it is unlucky to shake hands across a table. The table or 'board', which in the English language gave its name to a committee, has not replaced the fireside as the place where the Irish countryman talks—and talks business. When food is left out for the fairies or for visitors from the other world it is placed in front of the fire, and at Hallowe'en seats for the returning dead were arranged around the fire.

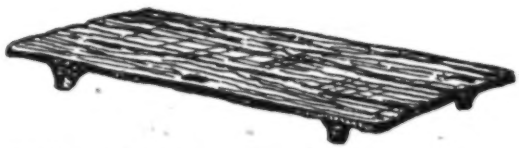

FIG. 26. Table, cut from the solid, from a Co. Armagh bog. It measures 20 in. by 12 in.

Similarly the fireside, not the table, attracted whatever means of illumination was available. The hob-lamp took the place of the table-lamp. Even when paraffin came in the oil lamp was still hung in the chimney. The older native oils, derived from fish and burnt in open lamps, were very unsavoury, and it was expedient to allow the fumes to escape with the chimney smoke. The iron crusie or open oil-lamp, its shape almost unchanged since classical times, was to be seen nearly everywhere around the coast until late in the last century (Fig. 27) but the paraffin lamp quickly swept it out of existence. Medieval crusies from Spain, Italy and north-western Europe are very similar to recent Irish examples, and it was from the Rhineland, it is said, that the crusie was taken to Pennsylvania, where it first succumbed to the new mineral oil. Stone moulds of uncertain age known from Scotland and Ireland show how the iron pans were hammered into shape. Inland, the place of the crusie was taken by resinous splinters of bog fir kept by the fire till tinder dry,

[1] Å. Campbell in *Folk-Liv* (1937), 234.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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[416]

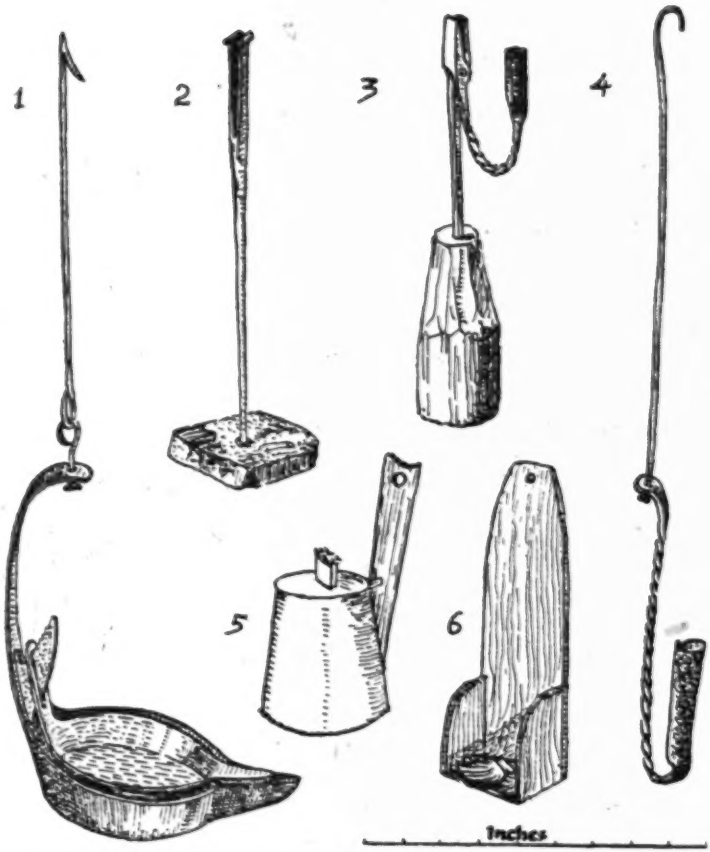

FIG. 27. Light-holders. (1) Crusie, Co. Antrim (scale × 2). (2) Fir-split holder, Co. Antrim. (3) Rush and candle-holder, Co. Antrim. (4) Weavers' candle-holder, Co. Armagh. (5) Hob lamp, Co. Cavan. (6) Scollop shell lamp, Aran Islands.

and by rush-lights held in iron pincers mounted on wooden or wrought-iron stands (Fig. 27). Candles of resin, tallow and beeswax were also made at home by dipping prepared strips of cloth repeatedly in an iron grisset and rolling out the candles on a board. Such candles played an important part in various

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

church festivals and at wakes, and though they are now bought they are made by hand in a few towns by chandlers who carry on a medieval tradition. One Dublin firm, established in 1488, manufactures large church candles of beeswax by methods which can have changed little with the centuries. In the home the candles were supported in wrought-iron holders or stuck into a turf by the fireside. Tall standard holders, often with adjustable fittings, were designed to give light to the weaver at the loom, and they are most typically found in Ulster (Fig. 28). The fine embroidery which occupied the women in the linen districts must have imposed a great strain on the eyes: there are stories of a single candle serving as a central source of light for a ring of seamstresses, each of whom held her work against a bottle full of water which acted as a magnifier.

In Ireland, as throughout Atlantic Europe, the dresser ranks as the most important and elaborate piece of furniture in the kitchen, and its position is prescribed by custom. It stands either against the side wall or against the partition between kitchen and bedroom. Since this partition is of no great antiquity we can be sure that the original place of the dresser was against the side-wall and that it has developed from, and taken the place of, shelves built into or attached to the side-wall. In part of Ulster it is referred to as 'the shelf'. I have already mentioned the tiers of stone shelves set in the wall which are preserved in the deserted houses of the Slievemore cluster on Achill Island. It is believed that the fashion of open crockery shelves was diffused from the court sideboards of the later Middle Ages in France and England, and it may be surmised that the wooden dresser was readily accepted in Celtic lands to replace wall shelves, from Elizabethan times on. The adoption of delph and tea-drinking in the eighteenth century no doubt accelerated the spread of the dresser, which had become, by that time, an essential part of Irish kitchen furniture (Plate 1). The corner-cupboard, evolving in much the same way from corner-shelves, is another article of furniture with a north-west European distribution. Similarly the coffer or store-chest spread through western Europe from the later Middle Ages onwards, replacing skin, straw, hollowed wood, or basket-work containers.

 [text continues on p. 93]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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By far the most versatile of home-produced rope-making materials is straw. Rye straw is longer, softer and more flexible than any other, but very little rye is now grown save along the west coast where it is still the most popular thatching material. Wheat straw is the best substitute, but in fact most farmers must now depend on oat straw, thus 'tying up' some of their fodder. Straw rope (súgán) not only had many direct uses but served as the basis for such crafts as the making of mats, baskets, bee-skeps, mattresses, hen roosts, pigeons' nests and horse harness. It was used for seating chairs and making arm-chairs, and for a great variety of hobbles and tethers for animals and ties for holding down thatch. The fondness of the Irish for tethering and hobbling their livestock must be seen in the light of inadequate fences and the conditions of partnership farming in open fields. Not only the larger animals, but hens, turkeys, and geese were commonly restrained in this way. 'All livestock of the poorer man is in this sort of thraldom' wrote Arthur Young.[1] One may still see a tethered hen with her chickens that might have stepped out of the illuminated pages of the fourteenth century Luttrell Psalter. A straw rope stretched across the kitchen made a serviceable clothes-line. Torches were sometimes made from twisted straw; on the other hand, when suitably coated with mud, straw ropes made a fireproof smoke-canopy. Chopped straw or layers of straw ropes were also used in constructing mud walls, and it is possible that, as in Sweden, stakes wrapped in straw rope daubed in clay were once an alternative to 'wattle and daub' for wall building. It has been stated that the fowlers of the Mayo coast would let themselves down the cliffs on straw ropes,[2] which must have been exceptionally well made; ropes made from the fibres of bog fir were more reliable. In Co. Antrim fowling ropes were of horse hide, but bent ropes are also recorded.[3] I have seen countrymen on a windy fair day wearing an improvised belt over their long coats in the form of a straw rope, and in the early nineteenth century children in Co. Cork were described as 'clad in nothing except a coarse woollen shirt that came half way down the thighs and

283 [231] [373] [333]

[1] Arthur Young, *Tour*, 2, part 2, 37.
[2] P. Knight, *Erris in the Irish Highlands*, 55.
[3] R. Dobbs, *County Antrim in 1683*.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

283 of these rope-making materials had other uses as well, not forgetting their functions in ceremony and magic as represented by Briget's crosses, harvest knots, the blaeberry baskets of Lammas and the rush ladders of Hallowe'en. Better known, [373] though no longer made, are the rushlights whose feeble glow, in the words of Gilbert White, made 'darkness visible'.

[284]
[285]

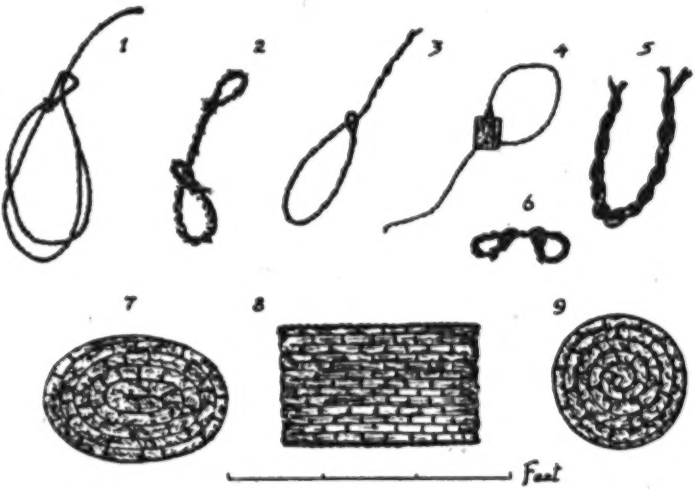

FIG. 68. Ropes and mats. (1) Rush burden rope, Co. Donegal. (2) Tie of cow-hair, Co. Kerry. (3) Willow bark burden rope, Co. Roscommon. (4) Grass burden rope, Aran Islands. (5) Tie of fir-rope, from roof, Co. Down. (6) Sheep's langle of oat straw, Co. Down. (7) Plaited mat of marram grass, Co. Wexford. (8) Coiled mat of rye straw, Aran Islands. (9) Coiled mat of oat straw, Co. Donegal.

283 Examples of ropes and mats of various kinds are shown in Fig. 68. The burden ropes, carefully made in two or three ply, 482 enabled quite heavy loads to be carried from inaccessible places. A correspondent in Co. Cork has sent me the following account of one method of lifting the burden, in this case of furze (gorse, whin) which was harvested both for bedding and for fodder. 'Passing his rope round the bundle, the carrier would throw himself on his back on top of the bundle, kick his heels in the air and jerk himself to the vertical, walking away completely concealed beneath a moving mountain of furze.' Where tracks

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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where curraghs were formerly known. But it is also characteristic of Scottish cobles and the boats of some English lakes. The inshore fishing boats of Co. Antrim also had booled oars,[1] and farther afield the single tholepin is said to typify the rowing boats of Madeira, the sardine boats of Portugal and some vessels of the Upper Nile. These often use a grommet, as do the boats of the north-east coast of England.

Sea-going curraghs are put to many uses, for inshore net fishing, for setting lobster pots or long lines, for gathering kelp and for carrying freight, livestock and passengers. But the most spectacular purpose to which they have been put is for hunting the basking shark or sunfish from whose liver, before the advent of paraffin, oil for lighting was obtained. A single fish will yield from seven to ten barrels of liver. Measuring up to forty feet in length, the basking shark is one of the world's largest fish and though harmless—its diet is minute copepods—its bulk makes it a formidable adversary. These fish move down the west coast in summer, and in early May they haunt the Sunfish Bank thirty miles off Achill Island, where they come to the surface in the morning and evening. The bank is remarkable for the break of the tide on it, although it lies between seventy and ninety fathoms near the edge of 'soundings' —the continental shelf—and a heavy swell makes conditions difficult for small boats. Here and elsewhere the sunfish used to be harpooned from curraghs, but the advantage lay with decked vessels which could stand by for several days. In the early nineteenth century as many as thirty or forty fish were sometimes killed on the Sunfish Bank in a single day of fine weather. Nowadays the sharks are taken in strong nets fixed to island headlands around which they swim. They are occasionally seen off the other Irish coasts, where they cause great havoc if they get involved in the fishing nets.

Of the small open clinker-built boats of traditional type which takes the place of the curragh on the north, east and south coasts, no systematic study has been made. Some of them betray their Norse inheritance in their lines or their names, for example the Wicklow skiff and the drontheim (Trondhjem) of the north coast. These boats are double-ended—unlike the cur-

[1] S. McSkimin, *The History and Antiquities of Carrickfergus*, 276.